

Philip Van Horn House  
Somerset Avenue, Bridgewater Township  
Near Bound Brook, Somerset County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-523

HABS  
NJ  
18-B00B.V.  
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer  
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

HABS  
NJ.

19-800B.V  
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Philip Van Horn House  
Somerset Avenue, Bridgewater Township  
Near Bound Brook, Somerset County, New Jersey

Owner: Calco Chemical Company

Date of Erection: About 1755 or 1770

Architect:

Builder: Philip Van Horn

Present Condition: Good

Number of Stories: Two and one-half

Materials of Construction: Foundation - stone

Exterior walls - frame  
construction

Interior walls - plaster

Inside brick chimneys

Roof - pitch, pent roof  
along front of wing

Historical Data:

There is an Indian deed for the year 1681 which covers a large part of the land on the west side of the Raritan River. Lot #3 was surveyed on September 25, 1683 for the several associates; the eastern part was assigned to Richard Hall. This soon passed to Archibald Campbell. Miss Bailey claims that this property came into the possession of John Chambers of New York City who sold to Cornelius Van Horn August 28, 1724.

We have not discovered this deed; the earliest deed we have found was one to Cornelius Van Horn dated May 19, 1727. We know that Cornelius Van Horn settled in New Jersey about the time of his purchase and we also know that he was recommended by Governor Burnet on December 20, 1726 and appointed on June 1, 1727 by the King to a seat on the council.

Cornelius Van Horn was a prominent merchant of New York City and a descendant of Cornelius Jansen who came from Holland about 1645. In the papers of Lewis Morris, he is mentioned as living about twenty-two miles northwest of Amboy which would be in the general region of the house of the survey.

One of the children of Cornelius was Philip who was baptized in 1719 in New York City and who was also a merchant of that city. Leaving there about 1754, he came to Somerset County, and he may have built the house of the survey about that time or right after his father's death. We know that Philip Van Horn was in Somerset County by 1755 for in that year he was ordered as colonel of militia to march with his regiment to repel the French and Indians. In 1759 he was elected Judge of the Common Pleas for Somerset County. The elder Van Horn made his will in 1768; it was probated on May 23, 1770. He left all his property to his wife and after her death one-half of his plantation to his son Philip and the other half to his son John. Philip received, however, his father's grist mill and six acres of ground about it; this mill, as far as we know, was a short distance above the house on the Middlebrook. It is possible the house of the survey was on this piece, but more likely on the piece described in a deed dated February 25, 1774 between Elizabeth Van Horn, mentioned as executrix of the last will and testament of Cornelius Van Horn, and Philip Van Horn and one Edward Foy of New York; the two Van Horns are mentioned as being of Bridgewater in the county of Somerset. This is an eight hundred acre tract and the deed excepts "the Grist Mill and six acres of land there to belonging and appurtenances thereon for the use and property of said Philip Van Horne". It is

described as being bounded on the west in part by lands of Archibald Campbell which he had purchased of Cornelius Van Horne and on the south in part by the rear of Kells Hall plantation which was the name of Campbells' plantation. This is the piece later known as Island Farm (NJ-525) and lies almost due south of the Van Horne House.

Phill's Hall or Convival Hall as it was sometimes known was the home of Philip Van Horn. During the Revolution his patriotism was doubted; he was put on parole by the Americans, but allowed to remain at his home. Cornwallis was entertained at this house after he had driven General Lincoln to the mountains in April 1777. Lord Stirling had his headquarters here during the winter 1778-1779 while Washington was at the Wallace House (NJ-20) and Steuben was at the Staats House (NJ-57). In October 1779 Colonel Sincoe, who was involved in the massacre at Hancocks Bridge (NJ-54), raided this house to capture as some say Governor Livingston who was not there. However, the older story is that he was after Colonel Moylan who was a son-in-law of Philip Van Horn. The house was also used by Colonel Bland of the Virginian Calvary and also by Captain Lee later General Harry Lee. From this house on October 12, 1778 Mary Van Horn, the eldest daughter of Philip married Stephen Moylan, colonel and later brigadier-general of the American Light Dagoons. Another daughter married Thomas Lansdale. Both Moylan and Lansdale were original members of the Society of Cincinnati.

Philip Van Horn had married Elizabeth Ricketts. What relation she was to James Ricketts who held the property after the death of Philip Van Horn we do not know, but on November 1, 1794 James Ricketts of Elizabethtown sold Phill's Hall to John Campbell also of Elizabethtown. In 1810 Campbell executed an agreement in Jamaica giving the property to his brother John and sister Margaret naming two trustees to handle the estate. These trustees sold the property to John Herbert. In the copying of the deed the property is called Phill's Hill

instead of Phill's Hall as it was known in the earlier deeds. John Herbert left the property in his will, which was made in 1856, to his wife Jane during her lifetime and then to his son John. John, Jr. died in 1886 and shortly before his death the property was transferred by William McMurty, sheriff to Rynier Veghte. There are seven transfers recorded between that date and 1934 when the Raritan Valley Land Company sold the property to the present owner.

#### Bibliography:

Bailey, Rosalie F. Pre-Revolutionary Dutch Houses and Families in Northern New Jersey and Southern New York New York, William Morrow and Company, 1936

Davis, T. E. First Houses of Bound Brook Bound Brook, The Chronicle Steam Printery, 1893

Morris, Lewis The Papers of (Governor of the Province of New Jersey from 1738 to 1746) New York, George P. Putnam, 1852 (Being one of the volumes of the New Jersey Historical Society Collections)

Snell, J. P. History of Sussex and Warren Counties, New Jersey Philadelphia, Everts and Peck, 1881

Whitehead, William A. Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New Jersey Newark, Daily Advertiser Printing House, 1882 (Being volume 11 of New Jersey Archives)

A search of records in the Somerset County  
Court House

A search of records in the Secretary of  
State's Office by Robert M. Falcey, Mercer  
County Office

Walter E. Ruff  
Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour D. Williams  
SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.  
District Officer

A D D E N D U M

Documentary evidences since obtained require correction of our previous account of this "Phil's Hill" estate and its mansion house, for as early as 1722 a house had been built on this site, and that may have remained until after the death of Col. Philip Van Horne in 1793. The present house is built on foundations of an earlier one, and its design is late 18th century, its woodwork details mostly of 1830 origin. As late as 1831, the farm was still called "Phil's Hill". The house stands on a hill above the north side of the Easton Turnpike and the west side of Middlebrook.

By a deed of 20 November 1722, Cornelius Van Horne of the City of New York, merchant, and Elizabeth his wife agreed with Joseph Reade of the same city, merchant, and Anne his wife in the partition of a 2754 acre tract extending from the left bank of the Raritan up and over the First Mountain, in what is since Bridgewater Township in Somerset County. A diagram annexed to this deed as recorded in East New Jersey Deed Book D-2, pages 7 to 14 is here copied as indicating that the houses thereon shown as Van Horne's and Reade's were later the sites of "Island Farm" house (NJ-525) and of "Phil's Hill" (here considered) respectively.

This deed recites title at length that (1) The Lords Proprietors of the Province of East New Jersey by Deed of 28 Feb. 1683 granted to Thomas Codrington of New York, merchant, 877 acres "at or near a place called the Raraton upon the north side of Raraton River in the County of Middlesex" (from which Somerset was later set off), bounded S. by the Raritan, W. by lands of Capt. John Palmer, N. by the "common hills", and E. by lands of Mr. John Royse.

And recites (2) that the said Proprietors by Deed of same date granted to John Royse of New York, merchant, likewise a tract of 877 acres at the

same place, bounded south by Raritan River, west by the (aforesaid) land of Mr. Thomas Codrington, north by the hills, and east by land laid out for the Proprietors.

And that (3) the said John Royse by his Deed of 30 August 1685 conveyed the abovesaid tract to the said "Capt. Thomas Codrington of Raraton River".

And that (4) the Proprietors by a further Deed, of 14 May 1688, granted to said Codrington a tract of 1000 acres "at the rear of his own land on the Raraton", which three tracts lying contiguous to each other in possession of said Codrington amounted to 2754 acres.

And that (5) the said Thomas Codrington and wife Margaret by their Deed of 8 May 1706 granted all the 3 tracts "with all and singular the houses, edifices, buildings, barns, stables, warehouses, landings" etc. to Philip French of the City of New York, merchant, since deceased.

And that (6) said Philip French\* by his will of 29 May 1706 devised unto his 3 daughters, Elizabeth (since married to Cornelius Van Horne aforesaid), Anne (since married to Joseph Reade aforesaid), and Margaret (since deceased unmarried), all his real estate at Raraton in the Province of East New Jersey lately purchased of Thomas Codrington.

\*Philip French, a wealthy merchant and son-in-law of Frederick Phillipse, resided next to the famous Fraunces Tavern on Pearl St., New York City. His will cited above also devises 5 pounds to the poor of the Parish of Kellshall in England, (as see abstract publ. in Collections N.Y.H.S. vol. 25, page 442) from which the name of his daughter Elizabeth Van Horne's share of his N.J. estate was derived.



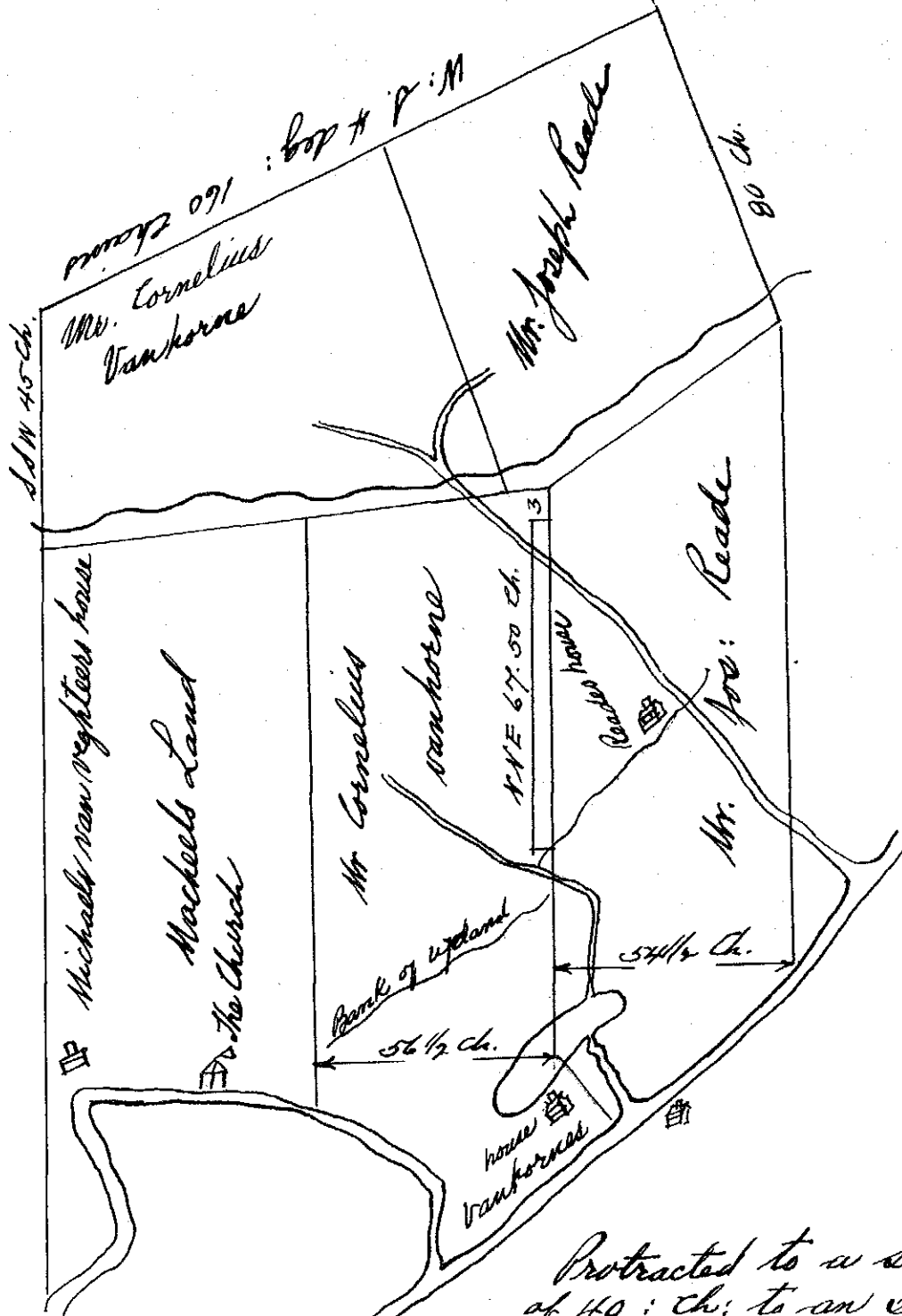
And that accordingly (7) the said Cornelius Van Horne and Joseph Reade\* in right of their wives became jointly possessed of the 2754 acres.

By the map of division of this acreage (see copy herewith) Reade obtained the eastern half and Van Horne the western (the latter thereafter called "Kells Hall", evidently in memory of his father-in-law French\*) both fronting on the Raritan and extending northwards over the mountain with the Middlebrook traversing Reade's share diagonally as shown. Conveyance of any part of the real estate of this Joseph Reade to his wife's nephew Philip Van Horne (son of said Cornelius) does not appear on public record, but the house here surveyed is certainly therein and not in the "Kells Hall" (Island Farm, NJ-525) part as incorrectly stated in our earlier account. Joseph Reade had sold the rear or mountain part of his share to Thomas Mc Ilwrath as mentioned in a Deed of 25 February 1774\*\*, and the fifty acre mill lot on Middlebrook to Aaron Lowzada and John Campbell by one of 13 March 1737.\*\*\*

It is true that Cornelius Van Horne of "Kells Hall", abovesaid, in his will of 19 February 1768, devised all his real estate to his wife Elizabeth during her lifetime, with power to sell it, and ordered a divion of his 1102 acre plantation to be made after her death, his sons Philip to have the eastern half and John the western. And also that his widow and executrix, Elizabeth Van Horne by her Deed of 25 February 1774\*\* accordingly conveyed to the son Philip Van Horne of same Township of Bridgewater and to Edward Foy of New York City for 3000 pounds the 800 acre rear part which extended from

\*This Joseph Reade was an eminent merchant in N.Y.C. and member of Council. He died 2 March 1771 in his 77th year. An Abstract of his Will is published in collections N.Y.H.S. vol. 31, p. 414.

\*\*Recorded in E.N.J. Deed Bk. H-3-236  
\*\*\* " " " G-2-478



*Protracted to a scale  
of 140 : ch. to an Inch*

Tracing of diagram recorded with the Deed of Nov. 1722 in book D-2, page 14 (now in office of Sec. of State) by which Cornelius Van Horne and Joseph Reade partitioned the 2754 acre tract in Bridgewater Twp., Somerset Co., N.J., of Philip French of N.Y.C., decd., their father-in-law. The site of the house indicated hereon as Van Hornes became later that of "Island Farm" house (NJ-525) and that of Reade's became "Phil's Hall" (NJ-523). The pond and Cuckolds Brook appear behind Van Horne's house and the Middlebrook beside Reade's is shown coming through the mountain at the gap now called Chimney Rock, with Raritan River the lower boundary of the estate.

the southern base of Watchung Mountain up and over it into the valley beyond. This is certainly not the site of the "Phil's Hill" house as suggested in our former account. In fact, the Sheriff seized the entire estate of said Cornelius Van Horne, deceased, in judgment proceedings, thus nullifying the provisions of the Will and the Deed above-mentioned, and conveyed the same to Jacob Ricketts by Deed of 9 February 1786, who proceeded to dispose of the fourteen lots into which it was divided. For details see our addendum to the historical data on NJ-525.

Being so dispossessed of his share of the Kells Hall plantation of his father, Col. Philip Van Horne continued residence on the former Joseph Reade estate, next adjacent on the eastern boundary, and it was named for him "Phil's Hill", but by what means he obtained title is not of record in either the Province or the County archives. Whether the original house of 1722 was then standing, we can not determine, but the present house on its foundations appears to be of early 19th century remodeling as indicated hereafter.

This Philip Van Horne, elder son of Cornelius and Elizabeth (French) Van Horne of New York City and "Kells Hall" plantation on Raritan River, Bridgewater Township, Somerset County, New Jersey, was baptized 29 April 1719 in that city, and appears to have followed his father's vocation as an important merchant there until 1754 when he is of record as a resident of New Jersey, and in 1755 as an officer in the Militia there during the French and Indian War, thus:

(quote) Col. Philip Van Horne marches tomorrow or Monday, with part of his regiment out of Somerset.....(a)

On May 12, 1759 he was appointed a Judge of Somerset County courts, a position which probably he held until the Revolution, and it is certain he was in the county after that war,

(a)The Pennsylvania Journal, 4 December 1755,abstracts from, reprinted in N.J. Archives, 1st ser., vol. 19, page 564

possibly as late as 1782. (b) He was appointed, with his brother John Van Horne, as a Judge and Justice of the Quorum by the Governor and Council in 1768, was a Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for Somerset County in 1770, and one of the gentlemen who established a grammar school at Middlebrook, "near the seat of Philip Van Horne".(c)

In addition to our previous account of the activities connected with this house and its family during the Revolution, the following contemporary report is quoted:

New York, December 19. By late accounts from New Jersey, we are informed that General Washington's Headquarters were at Mrs. Wallace's, about twelve miles from Brunswick; the Earl of Stirling's at Convivial-Hill, a seat of Philip Van Horne, Esq., about seven miles from Brunswick; Major-General Green's at Mr. Van Vechten's on the Raritan River; Brigadier General Knox's with the artillery, at Colonel M'Donald's at Pluckamin, about eighteen miles from Brunswick; with these four General Officers there are about seven and twenty hundred Rebels; Brigadier-General Maxwell commands at Elizabeth Town with his Brigade consisting of about 800 Militia.....(d)

(b) Somerset County Historical Quarterly Vol. 7. The account of "Phil's Hill" in the same, Vol. 1, pp. 81-85, confuses it with "Kells Hall".

(c) The Van Horne Family History, by Francis M. Maron, published E. Stroudsburg, Pa., 1929, page 118.

(d) The New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury, 21 December 1778; abstracts from, published in N.J. Archives, 2nd ser. vol. 1, page 599.

Col. Philip Van Horne abovesaid married Elizabeth Ricketts of New York City, evidently a daughter of William and Elizabeth (Walton) Ricketts, and a sister of William Ricketts of Elizabethtown, New Jersey (e), a wealthy family having also a plantation and sugar works in Jamaica, West Indies. The issue of this marriage (none of whom appear on record, however, as owners of "Phil's Hill" later) were: 1. Cornelius; 2. William removed to vicinity of Lost Creek, Va., 3. Philip married Mary, daughter of Edward Laight of New York City; 4. Mary Ricketts, baptized 3 November 1754, married 22 October 1778 Col. Stephen Moylan at "Phil's Hill"; 5. John, baptized 4 June 1759; 6 Elizabeth, baptized 2 August 1761; 7. Cornelia, baptized 11 June 1764, married Major Thomas L. Lansdale; and 8 Violetta, baptized 20 August 1766, married as his second wife, Maj. Thomas L. Lansdale. (f) and (g)

By May 15, 1793, Col. Philip Van Horne, having at some time previously removed from "Phil's Hill", was recently deceased, in Maryland, as the following obituary notice for the first time in accounts of him since compiled and published now proves:

(quote) Died - A few days since, in Maryland, Colonel Philip Van Horne, late of Middlebrook, in this State. (New Brunswick Guardian, May 15, 1793). (g)

(e) The Will of William Ricketts of Elizabethtown, dated 6 March 1760, names brother-in-law Philip Van Horne. (N.J. Archives, Vol. 33, p. 353)

(f) Register of Baptisms, St. John's Church, Elizabeth, N.J., published in The Genealogical Magazine of New Jersey. Evidently periodic visits were made from Phil's Hill at Middlebrook to Elizabeth for baptism rather than to Christ Church, New Brunswick, a much shorter journey, on account of the Ricketts relatives in the former place.

(g) File in Rutgers University Library.

Probate of the estate of Col. Philip Van Horne is not on record in Somerset County, N. J., nor any Deeds by which the title to "Phil's Hill" passed to or from him. However, by a Deed of 1 November 1794, one James Ricketts Esq., (h) of Elizabeth Town, N. J., (evidently a nephew of Van Horne's wife), with his wife Sarah, conveyed to John Campbell of same place, for \$5000, lots numbers 4 and 13 of the Kells Hall estate (reciting title successively from Hugh Rowen, Jacob Ricketts, and estate of Cornelius Van Horne deceased) and "also all that tract of land late the property of Philip Van Horne", being eighty-four acres bounded south by Raritan Main Road, west partly by John Hagehout's front lot and partly by Cornelius Van Horne's, north by said Hagehout's back lot, and east by Luzada and Campbell's mill lot, "formerly Joseph Reade's, ..... with all and singular the houses" etc., but without reciting his title to this tract. (i)

By Deed of 24 April 1810, John Campbell of the Parish of Trelawney in County of Cornwall, Jamaica Island, Esq., "late of Phil's Hill in the State of New Jersey", and wife Ann, conveyed to his brother James Campbell of said parish, and to Robert Lenox and Charles Wilkes, both of New York City, as trustees, for their sister, Margaret Campbell "at present of New Brunswick, N. J., spinster", Phil's Hill and described it as about 218 acres bounded east by a road called Tea Lane leading from Bound Brook, north by lands of Adam Anderson and James Henry, south and west by Peter Welsh, heirs of Schenck, David Bush, John and Thomas Shepard, also two woodlots belonging to the farm, and all in exchange for the plantation or sugar works, called Gibraltar, in said Island of Jamaica. (j)

(h) James, son of Col. William and Elizabeth Ricketts, bapt. 6 Oct. 1754, per register of St. John's Church, Elizabeth, cited ante.

(i) Somerset County Deed Book A., page 334

(j) Ibid Book P - page 1.

By Deed of 2 December 1831, the Trustees and Margaret Campbell abovenamed, of Somerset County, conveyed for \$9550 "all that certain farm or plantation known by the name of Phil's Hill situated in the Township of Bridgewater" Somerset County, to John Herbert of said County, reciting the Deed above, and that said James Campbell is deceased without heirs. (k)

#### Architectural Analysis:

The first house on this site was erected by 1722 for Joseph Reade. The present one about 1793, and the interior remodelled soon after 1831 by John Herbert.

The similarity between this frame house and the "Island Farm" house (NJ-525), less than a mile southward is remarkable in floor plans, elevations and some of the details, as in materials of construction, the only contrast being in the gable roof of the former and the gambrel one of the latter; but the proportions of "Island Farm" house produce a certain effect of elegance, while those in the house here considered result rather in one of bulk, especially when viewed from the highway below its hilltop setting.

Subsequently to its erection, the main house was extended by the two story service wing at its east gable end, as is clearly evident in the stone foundation walls of the latter butting against that of the former in a straight vertical joint, and in the brick wall built against the outside of that wall for the independent support of the first floor joists of the wing. Further evidence of this appears in the original outside entrance steps from the basement of the main house remaining in situ at a doorway in the foundation of the east gable end but concealed by the floor of the "milk room" above when the annex was made. That this

house itself was erected on at least part of the foundations of an earlier one (the Joseph Reade House of 1722) is demonstrated in the documentary evidences above outlined and indicated by certain features in the present construction. In the east end of the basement (drawing sheet number 5) and extending up to the underside of the boards of the present first floor are useless brick foundations for two non-existing fireplaces back to back and for their common chimney, even the arch to carry the hearth of each being still in place, all clearly a survival from an earlier house here. This same condition is found in "Island Farm" house mentioned above. The four separate chimneys, two in each gable end of both these very similar houses as rebuilt, are an arrangement in mansion house design as developed in post-Revolution work, "Island Farm" house being evidently of date about 1793. Hence, it is possible that the house here considered was rebuilt sometime after the death of Col. Philip Van Horne in the same year, and so was not the actual one on this site which was occupied as headquarters by the Earl of Stirling in 1778.

Consideration of the interior woodwork in order to determine the age of the present house shows a variety of molding profiles dating from the late 18th century. For example, the very plain mantel common to the fireplace in three of the four rooms of the first floor is definitely of the Greek Revival period of 1815-1850, and apparently replacements of earlier ones. The massive machine-turned newell post, the spindles, and handrail, of the stairway likewise are of this later work. The windows of the four living rooms have trim extending to the floor and a wood panel filling the space between sill and floor, a treatment common to early 19th century work as the moldings further testify. The trim of the windows of the second story is bracketted out at the shoulders in Greek fashion, finish on the molded sill, and matches that of the passage doors, all in the same heavy scale of the moldings just mentioned.



Some of the doors themselves, the six panel ones, are of earlier work as the bevelled edge panels indicate, and the chair-rail found in the second story rooms shows the earlier delicacy of scale in contrast with the other woodwork. The high baseboard of  $9\frac{1}{2}$  inches with heavy cap moldings is common to the rooms in both floors and appears to be of early 19th century work. The glass panes of the windows, some being nearly 12 by 16 inches in size are much larger than those in colonial work and must date from about 1830.

Of exterior woodwork, the front and rear main entrance doorways with glass transom and side lights are patently of the period (1830) mentioned, as also is the contemporary porch at each.

*Lewis D. Cook*  

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Supervising Historian